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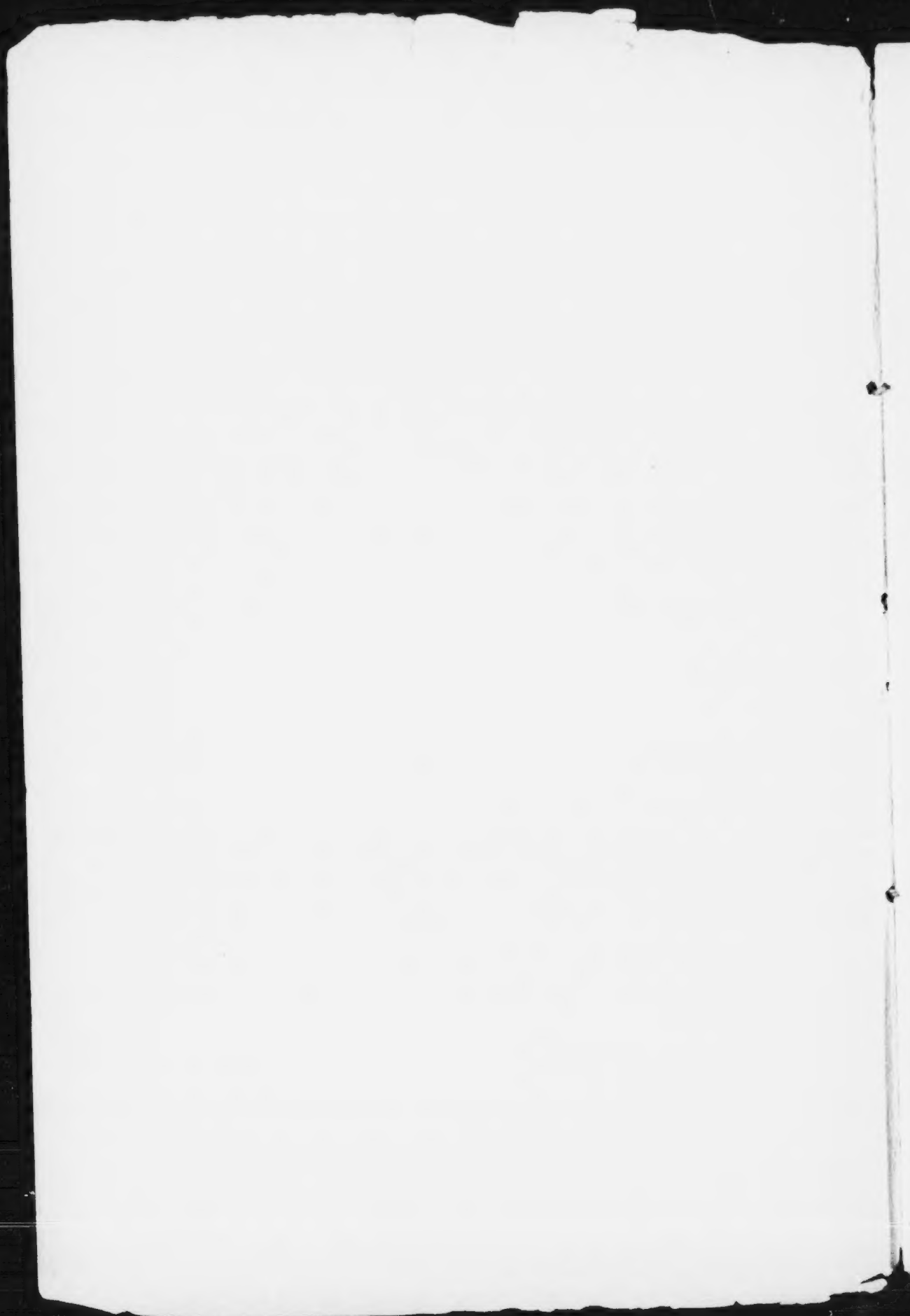
Annual Sermon

Chalmers
Church
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First
December
1918

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St. Andrew's Society

Kingston



Annual Sermon

BY

The Rev. Principal R. Bruce Taylor

Queen's University

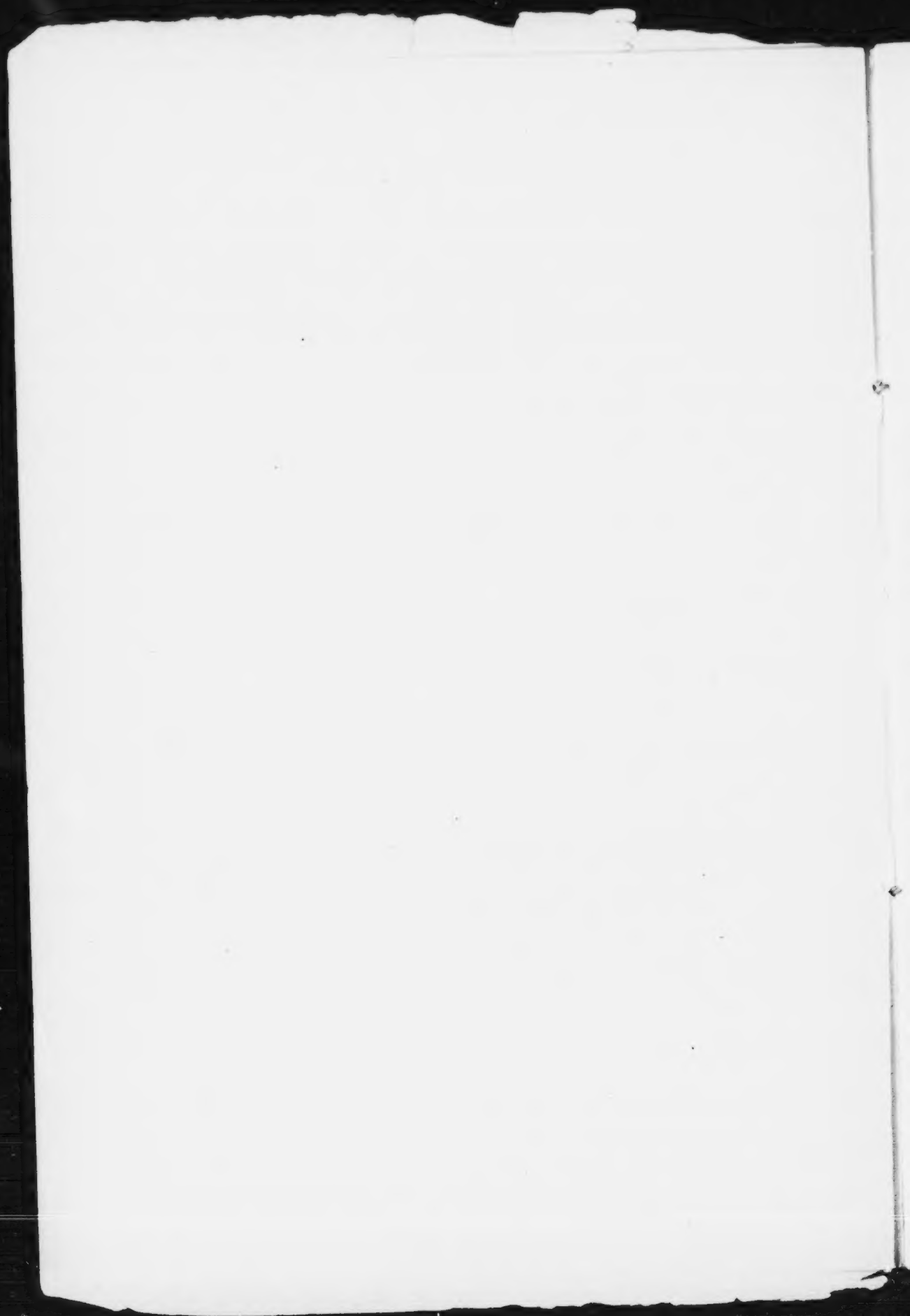
Chaplain of the Society

In Chalmers Church

December 1st, 1918

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The St. Andrew's Society of Kingston has sustained the heaviest loss that could befall it in the death of its most justly honoured President, Major John Dall. It brings the war closer to us to think that this man, so robust, so powerful, so quick in all his thinking and in all his acting, should have fallen a victim to the strain of his work in India. Had he stayed at home, a family man with much depending on him, no one could have felt that his choice had been other than wise. But he was a true son of his country and it was for him impossible, in such a time, to stay still. He volunteered for service with his old regiment, his ability was at once recognized, and he was placed upon the Staff. His letters of recent months had been full of a note of tiredness, unusual in a man of such force. His sudden death from a disease that one never would have thought would have stricken him, is as truly the result of his service in the war as if he had fallen with a bullet through his head. The sympathy of the Society, as, indeed, of the whole community, goes out to Mrs. Dall in this saddest of human sorrows. We pray that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may dwell with her and with the little daughter whom the father was not to be spared to see.

To-night we meet to remember the country from which we have sprung, to recall the things by which it has become great, and, without making any excuse for it, to indulge in a little self-congratulation. Modesty has been the badge of all our tribe, but occasionally we allow truth to peep forth. Certainly the place that the country, with material resources and population so small, has already gained is a very remarkable fact. Even to-day the population of Scotland is only a little more than five million. But Scotchmen have small faculty for stopping still at home, and they have claimed the world as the suburbs of their city. The analysis of the reasons of this success is a matter that can never lose its interest for the men and women concerned. Scotchmen have been known to fight among themselves, but they are singularly united against foes, or rivals, or even critics who deny to them the first place upon the sun; and while one remembers in the life of Scotland not a few things that have been unlovely, and some things that have borne the mark of a certain littleness, still there are broad

features of life and character that are common to the whole society that the country has produced, wholly admirable in themselves.

I.

First of all there is *the Scotchman's passion for education*. Scotland has always been, relatively, a poor country. The richness of the Highlands lies in natural beauty, not in any agriculture or mineral resources. The Valley of the Clyde has great wealth in coal and iron. The ships, and the commerce carried by ships, have made of Glasgow a very rich city. Edinburgh, as the capital of the country, has drawn to itself the literary and legal and professional interest, and Dundee has become rich through its commerce with India. But, generally speaking, wealth is rare, and income is small. This general need for carefulness, however, has not meant any stinting of the things of the mind. It has been a poverty not associated with any servility of disposition. The man has been as good as his master, and "A man's a man for a' that" is even truer of Scotland than it is of many a democracy which with more confidence expresses its principles before your eyes. Wherever there is genuine intellectual ability the Scotchman is ready to recognize it and to give it its due place, apart altogether from the question of wealth. The position, for instance, of the University Professor in Scotland is as high as any in the land. He is not a rich man, and he may not always be an agreeable man, but his attainments have given him the place he holds, and the consideration he meets with is due to the belief that he stands for learning generally. The circles of learning and of commerce and agriculture have been kept close together by the desire in every household to have at least one of its members college-bred. You remember the immortal passage in Carlyle's "Reminiscences," where he describes the long walk from the Border to Edinburgh in the early days of his student life there. Go where you will in Scotland you will find the cottage inhabited by those who have a son or a brother somewhere in the high places of the intellectual field. I can think of one very old lady, whom I knew in Aberdeen, far

advanced in the nineties, and with a face as placid as a picture or a piece of china. She had twelve children, six sons and six daughters. Her husband had been only of respectable uselessness, and it had fallen to her to rear the family. She never allowed them in any way to drop. She took lodgers, she sewed far into the night, she sent each one of those sons to the University. The first one became manager of the greatest Australian Bank; the second was member of Parliament for the Dumfries Burghs; the third was in the Indian Civil Service and Mayor of Calcutta; the fourth was a barrister, and, though he died young, had reached a high place in the Bombay bar; the fifth is an architect of mark, still living in Scotland, and the sixth had the misfortune to marry a rich wife. That may be an exceptional case, but not wholly so. The University is held up to every lad by parents as his goal when he is at school, and as an open approach to any source of influence.

This interest in the things of the mind shows itself with the most complete genuineness in the extent of reading on the part of those who are reading simply for their pleasure or their own up-building. My first charge in the ministry was in Ayrshire among the weavers. They were all of them extreme radicals, of course; the descendants of the Chartists of early days. But there were certain books on which they exercised their wits; books that needed a rare power of concentration to master; "Sartor Resartus" was the companion of the leisure and lighter hours. The real study was Mill's "Logic" and Mill's "Political Economy." It was at the sale of a weaver's books that I bought nearly all the Arabic literature I possess, as well as many another good volume. Burckhardt's Arabic Proverbs, Don Quixote with the Doré illustrations, the "Bannatyne Memorials"—all these came from the library of a man who never in his life had more than \$6.00 a week. Pass along the streets of Edinburgh or Aberdeen and you will be amazed at the number of first class book shops. There is nothing in Canada to compare with at least half a dozen of the Aberdeen book stores, and these book shops of the old country are a true indication of the major interests of the mind. You may remember how Barrie tells of his mother

reading through Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" once a year. That is by no means an exceptional case. I remember well a little hunch-back who looked after a Clyde steamer pier, who felt that he had satisfied one of his intellectual thirsts when I was able to lend him a copy of the famous "Inquiry" of Malthus.

II. *The Universal Interest in Religion.*

This intellectual way of looking at things is due undoubtedly to the influence of Presbyterianism. That great castle that John Knox hoped to build was erected on a much smaller scale than it would have been had his schemes not been thwarted by greedy and half-hearted nobles. But still every parish, from the time of the Reformation, had its school under the care of the Kirk Session, and it must be confessed that, while the religion had a certain harshness in it, that difficulty might be ascribed to the fact that those things were dwelt on which referred rather to the philosophy than to the warmth of religion. In the Theological world Scotland has produced thinkers rather than saints. The Confession of Faith is not only a statement of religion, it is a philosophy. The difference between the view of religion adopted by the English and by the Scotch may be judged, not imperfectly, by the first question in the catechism of the English and Scotch churches. The Shorter Catechism begins with the imposing question, "What is man's chief end?" The English catechism begins its study with the query, "What is your name?" A religion such as Calvinism, which believed that from all Eternity some men was destined to eternal life and some to eternal death, had of necessity a minor tone. It belied, as Froude has pointed out, its own severity by producing a home life of singular simplicity and beauty, but that overwhelming thought of the decrees of God lay like fate in a Greek drama upon the lives of countless numbers of God's people who thought that they could feel the warmth of the sun, but felt that they were compelled to deny its presence. The practical working out of Calvinism was a much more human and liberal thing than its intellectual statements might have led one to believe, but the

sharp dilemma in the philosophy, the struggle between the purposes of God and the free will of man, not only took much of the laughter out of life, but it laid the stress upon the intellectual rather than upon the spiritual side of religion.

Religion then was the supreme interest of this country where life had little to distract. It was not wonderful that when divisions of opinion on religious matters arose these divisions should be extremely bitter. Men fight desperately for things in which they are desperately interested, and a good deal of toleration is due only to the fact that in their hearts there are some people who do not care. Every advance in thought has been challenged in the person of some strong and representative man and the whole country has been stirred by an issue that would hardly receive a newspaper paragraph in the life of another land.

The interest taken in these "heresy hunts," as they have been called, was immense, and the effect upon the country at large was that every shepherd, whatever side of the argument he might take, knew that there was an issue and he knew the whole issue. In a country spread abroad through thousands of miles as Canada is, it is not possible to concentrate interest on any one question, least of all upon a question relating to the interpretation of the Bible; but the thing is possible in Scotland where the whole population practically is Presbyterian, and where the religious interest is still supreme. The vitalizing effect of these heresy hunts cannot be overestimated. They have resulted in a breadth of view, and in a toleration for fresh thought that seemed to be far enough removed from the original type of Scottish religion. Within my own memory religious opinion has made great forward strides owing to the publicity of heresy hunts. In the case of Professor Wm. Robertson Smith the issue was raised as to whether or not there were in the historical books of the Old Testament various strata of narrative following different phases of Hebrew thought, embodying traditions and legends, and fused together at an age centuries later than that in which these documents were first compiled. It was a question of first class moment and for eight years the case went on in one religious

court or another. The whole country rang with it. Prof. Smith himself delivered lectures throughout Scotland, not for the purpose of raising controversy, but to inform the public of the ground on which his views were based. Every man and woman in Scotland was sent back to the Bible to see whether or not the issue had justification in the facts. In the long run Prof. Smith lost his case, but the views for which he contended gained, if not a complete victory, at least a complete toleration. Some years afterwards, in the case of Prof. A. B. Bruce, my father's most intimate friend, and the man after whom I have been called, a question was raised with regard to the Synoptic problem. This question was an issue of first class moment, fought out in the case of a scholar of first class ability. Bruce was a man of such standing that what he said could not be ignored and whether men agreed or disagreed they knew that here was a question raised not in any wantonness, but as the inevitable result of the advance of thought. In the case of Dr. Marcus Dods the relationship of the Mosaic law to the words of Christ was made familiar to all the country. But the last case, that of Prof. Henry Drummond, was the one that perhaps aroused the widest interest. Drummond was a man of extraordinary personal charm. His work among students had wonderfully changed the tone of the university. He had been a large factor in the formation of the Students' Christian Movement. He was an evangelist of great power and success. When he raised the whole question of evolution he could not be ignored even by those to whom Darwin and Huxley were names of horror and distress. In every glen, and on every moor these high questions were discussed. That they could be discussed at all was due to this genuine interest in the things of religion, and that they were discussed resulted in the wonderful widening of knowledge and of fearlessness in the handling of new facts.

III. *Radicalism in politics.*

It is impossible to say what will be the outcome of the present condition of things. War has given the working man a new place in the community. He now possesses what he

never had before, a certain amount of funded wealth. He is in danger of becoming a capitalist. That may result either in the formation of a labour party stronger and more responsible than before or in the gradual attrition of the more robust factors in Liberalism. But, up to this time, the characteristic of Scottish politics have been its liberalism, and its intelligent and unfettered discussion of a political situation. Anyone who ever heard an Englishman who was a purely party candidate being heckled by one of the electors who had been carefully preparing traps for some weeks previously is never likely to forget the experience. There was on the part of the heckler a bewildering mastery of the political history of the past half century and a familiarity with the peculiarities of taxation that put the onus on the defence. It was not for nothing that Adam Smith was a Scotchman.

But the Scotchman's ability in public affairs does not confine itself to mere criticism. In *municipal management* there is a rare amount of genuine interest displayed. The readers of John Galt will remember the delightful picture of the "Provost"; and this habit of taking municipal affairs seriously has not broken down with the passing of the years. The best men are proud to have the handling of local administration and scandals are unknown. Into the work of Town Councils and School Boards there is put an amount of voluntary toil which is amazing, but the labour has its reward in the respect and recognition of the community. To be a "Bailie" is to have reached a pinnacle—the Bailie is the unpaid local magistrate—and however fond the Scot may be of arguing the point he is quite aware of the fact that authority must reside somewhere and he is most content to recognize it in the men whom he is meeting every day in the business life. The administration of Glasgow has its equal nowhere in the world. It seems to have solved the problem of municipal ownership, and to have discovered that public utilities can belong to the public and have the returns go back to the public in improved service or in reduced taxation. It took a great war to teach the British Government that if you wanted a great government concern to be run in a business-like way it

was a good thing to turn to the men who had been doing that kind of thing on a large scale for a generation. Glasgow discovered that long ago. It is forty years since Sir James Marwick was appointed Town Clerk of Glasgow. He made his own terms. He received a salary of \$25,000 a year; he could not be dismissed; he could retire whenever he pleased on an allowance of \$17,000 a year. A whole council of careful Scotchmen entered into an agreement such as that and it was a brilliant success. Men who believed as a matter of theory in equality secured the best lawyer and publicist of his time and told him they wanted his criticism and expected him to keep them out of hot water. It was the paradox of radicalism. But the peculiarity of democracy is that it sets up an absolute monarch and is best pleased when its monarch is most absolute. What it claims is the right to choose its man.

IV.

Unquestionably this trend of public life has been aided in Scotland by *the position of the minister and of the church*. Every division in the Presbyterianism of Scotland has had to do with the rights of the people in the appointment of the minister, and patronage now is entirely dead. The minister who in Scotland has so strong a position is invariably a man of the people. There is no such gap between him and his flock as there is between the clergyman in England of gentle birth and of Oxford training and the congregation of agricultural labourers over whom he is supposed to watch. He may do his duty never so faithfully, but he is always a man apart, because there is nothing between him and the people that is common unless it be his faith. There is none of the community of upbringing, nor does he expect in his people a community of religious interest. When I began my ministry in the uplands of Ayrshire, the vestry was invaded at the conclusion of every evening service by a number of keen theologians who disagreed with the theology, or had some fresh light to throw on it, or some new reading to give of a relevant text. One had to be prepared for anything, a weaver with the Greek Testament at his finger ends or another with the "Fourfold

State" in a well-thumbed copy. Such a question as the Perseverance of the Saints was a never failing source of debate. Perhaps we never got any further with our discussions, but the fact that such were the interests gave a rare zest to preparation and to pastoral work. It was indeed a sphere in which a man found his level. "Weel, *perhaps* I will be able to sit under ye," was the last shot of an aged saint as the young minister left her house at the close of his first visit.

V.

It would not be fair to talk about the life of Scotland without referring to *some of the lighter sides of it*. It was not all theology nor was it all politics. It was full of a wonderful human kindness, and lighted up with the most genuine humour. This is not the place to speak of the humour of the Scot, but the thing that gives it its peculiar quality is that it is a view of life rather than a play on words or ideas, and its grimness is due to the contrast between the greatness of the cardinal facts of life such as death, power, brains, progress, and the littleness of the people who have to deal with those facts. It is very different from the wit of the Irishman, and it only stares in quiet astonishment at the man who thinks that a pun is amusing. And so the Scot can laugh at himself and is not in the least distressed when others laugh at him. After all, those laugh longest who laugh last. He feels his footing to be so secure that it dismays him not at all to have some one question the shape of his boots. They serve his turn at all events.

VI.

It is a strange thing that there should be so *intense a love of the land of its birth* in a race so given to wandering. And in truth that homesickness is increased by the fact that the more the race wanders the more convinced it becomes that there is a matchless beauty in Scotland itself. Other lands have higher mountains and broader lakes and clearer skies; other lands have a rainy and a dry season while Scotland has just one season and that the wet one. But yet with all its disadvantages of climate, perhaps because of the large amount

of moisture, no land makes such an appeal in its colouring and intimacy. In the Rockies there are peaks that are superb in form and situation but the scenery of the Rockies has a peculiar quality of sternness due perhaps to the lack of human association. To climb these summits is work for the skilled mountaineer, nor will anyone live on their slopes save the hunter and the prospector. To gaze down into the depths of the Grand Canyon and to watch its changing colours in the sunset is to view one of the wonders of the world, but the memory of these precipices has in it a touch of horror. But Scotland is a kindly land. Even its desolate spots have a wealth of human association. Romance clings around the crumbling walls of the little Highland fortress, and on these wet hillsides you may yet trace out the line of the walls of the cottage, and find, growing among the thistles and the nettles, dwarf currant and gooseberry bushes, successors of the plants of the old and happy garden of a century gone. The Island of Ulva has on it now no inhabitant. The McLeas who tenanted it were driven out a century ago to make room for sheep. But the island raised a whole regiment for the Peninsular wars and long after the name of the proprietor has sunk into oblivion, the "Ulva Fencibles" will have their place in history. The island of Eigg is no place to approach save in the calmest of calm weather, but when you land there you find in the sinister cave the story of the fight to the death between the McDonalds and the McLeods, and in the clear cut line across that little island between Protestants and Roman Catholics how much there is of ancient ecclesiastical and political history. And there are almost inaccessible rocks between Jura and the mainland where are to be found perfect remains of the Celtic Church of 1300 years ago. There swept by the Atlantic spray is the little chapel with the stone that marks with its rude figure and crozier the resting place of one of these early missionaries who first carried the truth to the country; and outside there is the little spring whence was drawn the water for the community; and a little lower beside the one landing place is the tiny burying ground divided into two portions, one two feet or so higher than the other. For in that religious com-

munity there was no equality of the sexes and things were so arranged in burial, that at the Resurrection Day the men should not be forestalled by their partners. It is a country full of memories, Celtic, Norwegian, Jacobite; a country scored by economic circumstance and laid waste by the cupidity and selfishness of men who remembered their privileges and forgot their duties. It is a land in which beneath the hardness of religion, fancy and poetry still hold sway and where goblins walk by night. Apart from the great cities, commercialism has scarce touched it. There is leisure for the things of the mind, there is time for human friendship; there is beauty in the world and there is the seeing eye to behold it. There men live unheralded and are gathered quietly unto their fathers. It may not be in unheroic days the most heroic way of life. It raises afresh the great issue whether we live to work or work to live. But it has in it a contentment with simple things which is one of the first elements in happiness however the economist may question the attitude. And above all it is an estimate of the value of life in which noise and advertisement play no part.

I should belie what I have said as to the Scotchman's humour and faculty of self-criticism if I tried to maintain that this was a race gifted beyond its neighbours. The nation has, like other nations, its own most manifest faults. But in the rough and tumble of life, where processes are judged by their results, this is a people which has taken a place of which it may well be proud. The Scot has had sufficient catholicity of view to understand that he may learn much from everyone. But he has shown himself to be a good listener, and he takes pains to understand the other man's point of view. He may have felt himself superior to his surroundings but he has taken good care to keep his feelings to himself. The man who professes ignorance goes further than the man who claims omniscience, for the dominie in all of us seeks to instruct the ignorant, while the schoolboy in all of us is anxious to set the omniscient in his place. The Scotchman has believed that it was better, if it could be honestly done, to get the world to work for him rather than against him. And with this general

attitude there has gone an education that was first rate so far as it went, a frame in which inherited gout was the rarest of all diseases, a measuring of success which looked to something other than the immediate material result, and above all a religious outlook which had as its great precept this, that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of wisdom.

The race has earned its place in the comity of nations in the piping times of peace, and the race that has been credited with so much caution has gained a new reputation as a fighting force in this great war. Out of a population of five and a half million it has sent 620,000 to the Front, while Ireland out of a population almost identical in size has sent 170,000. Scotland has had more men killed in this war than Ireland has sent overseas. And if any citizen of the United States should ever feel inclined to tell you that the Old Country had not done its share you can remind him that the Scottish casualties alone were greater than those of the whole of the United States. The reputation that these Scottish troops have earned is just what we should have expected but the country has paid a vast price for the victory that has been won. The Gordon Highlanders were recruited in Aberdeen, the Black Watch in Dundee, and the Highland Light Infantry in Glasgow. Many of the country districts have lost most of their young men and it is difficult to see what economic motive will ever direct the stream of population again to the Western Islands, or to the northern moors. These spaces that were already becoming silent seem destined to become even more so and the valleys to become increasingly places of memory.

But if war and economic stress are changing the centres of population, nothing has been able to change the temper and character of the people. It has had in it these rare qualities in good measure, reverence for God, appreciation of learning, a spiritual view of existence, a simplicity of life, a sense of responsibility for all material possessions, a cherishing of old convictions, a worship of the home, a readiness in crises to put all things to the touch of country and sacrifice. That is the present possession of the Scot at home and the heritage of the Scot abroad. Nor is there any greater heritage than that.

